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# SASA GALLERY

10 October - 2 November 2007

*spill*





# *spill*

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All images made in collaboration by  
Ruth Fazakerley and Agnieszka Golda  
mixed media, 2007





# Introduction

*Spill* is an exhibition of installation based work developed collaboratively by Ruth Fazakerley and Agnieszka Golda. In this exhibition the artists explore affect, emotion and subjectivity in cultural and spatial contexts through art and text.

*Spill* is one of a series of research based exhibitions that engage external scholars to participate in the SASA Gallery's exhibition and publication programs. The external scholar for this exhibition is Dr Divya Tolia-Kelly, Lecturer in Human Geography at the University of Durham. Her research explores issues of ethnicity, identity and cultural values and their impact on understanding affectual and emotional responses to landscapes. While in Adelaide, as well as writing the catalogue essay, Tolia-Kelly will participate in events associated with the exhibition, including a symposium developed in partnership with the Cultures of the Body Research Group, School of Communication, UniSA.

The SASA Gallery supports a program of exhibitions focusing on innovation, experimentation and performance. With the support of the Division of Education, Art and Social Sciences, the Division Research Performance Fund and Five Year Research Infrastructure Fund the SASA Gallery is being developed as a leading contemporary art space publishing and exhibiting high-quality research based work, and as an active site of teaching and learning. The SASA Gallery showcases South Australian artists, designers, writers and curators associated with South Australian School of Art and Louis Laybourne-Smith School of Architecture in a national and international context.

The SASA Gallery has received immense support towards the development and implementation of this exhibition and catalogue. Divya Tolia-Kelly's travel to Adelaide from Durham has been supported by Research & Innovations Services, UniSA, with a grant from the International Research Scholars Scheme. The catalogue has been designed through the Bachelor of Visual Communications (Honours) Student consultancy and printed by Cruickshank Printers, who give students the opportunity engage in the printing process. The excellent wine served at the opening was supplied by Perrini Estate.

Mary Knights  
Director, SASA Gallery





# Confessions

Ruth Fazakerley

*Spill. We were initially playing with the imperative embedded in speaking the word: the active injunction to perform; to spill one's guts; to tell, reveal, divulge, leak, ooze. At the same time, the physical enactment (handswept glass onto the floor) generates another kind of involuntary, physiological response. Both senses of the word evoke liquid, fluid metaphors – something difficult to bind or contain; seeping or escaping at the edges.<sup>1</sup>*

Affect is another word that might be used to encompass some of the working concerns in this collaborative exhibition between Agnieszka Golda and myself, albeit that it is something of a contested term in the variety of its definition and technical deployment through different disciplines.<sup>2</sup> Commonly used to mean feeling or emotion, or the action of having an influence on something ('to move'), our own interest in affect is with thinking about the ways in which the relations between bodies, things and spaces have been theorised: concerns that have been central to the development of contemporary art installation practices, as much as marketing,<sup>3</sup> industrial systems of manufacture and labour organisation,<sup>4</sup> or urban design.<sup>5</sup> Bodies move, think and feel, and do these things together and in relation with the world. 'Can we think of a body without this', Brian Massumi asks, 'an intrinsic connection between movement and sensation whereby each immediately summons the other?'<sup>6</sup> In his project exploring the implications of taking into account movement and sensation within postmodern cultural studies of the body and human subject, typically wary of empiricism, Massumi draws upon Deleuze to think of affect as 'interaction' rather than simply a physiological response or expression: both material and immaterial, corporeal and incorporeal; not necessarily coincident (but prior, during, and even following) classificatory or cognitive activities. For Massumi, affects are:

*virtual synesthetic perceptions anchored in (functionally limited by) the actually existing particular things that embody them. [...] Formed, qualified, situated perceptions and cognitions fulfilling functions of actual connection or blockage are the capture or closure of affect. Emotion is the most intense (most contracted) expression of that capture – and of the fact that something has always and again escaped.<sup>7</sup>*

In this theorisation, affect is a reminder of the body's intensities and multiplicities, Gay Hawkins suggests: 'a surplus; an excess; [affects] are about those registers of the self that escape the knowable, manageable subject'.<sup>8</sup> This body is always in transition, always in relation – never completely knowing and ready to act, never wholly known or ready to be acted upon. To understand affect then, Hawkins continues, is to think

about 'the connective power of relationality', the indeterminate place of *and*, which lies between any two things in relation with each other and from where new and unpredictable things might surface.

For Massumi, despite the lack of a 'cultural-theoretical vocabulary' specific to affect, there is a growing appreciation of affect within cultural theory as central to an understanding of 'late capitalist culture, in which so-called master narratives are perceived to have foundered'.<sup>9</sup> This observation holds true of recent work in human geography, including strands of 'affectual' and 'emotional' research described by Divya Tolia-Kelly as attempting to attend to 'the intractable silencing of emotions in social research and public life'.<sup>10</sup> The writing of geographers such as Tolia-Kelly, Nigel Thrift and Deirdre McKay has also provided an important point of connection for both Agnieszka Golda and myself as the tools with which to approach our individual research interests. These are interests that have arisen, in my own case, at the conclusion of PhD work that examines public art and urban, social relations; and for Golda, as a consequence of her completed Masters degree and forthcoming practice-based doctoral research into sensuous geographies and migrant experience. The research project *Spill* then has evolved as a period of discussion, making, reading, blogging, and exhibition; coming out of our shared interest in exploring contemporary thinking about affect in cultural theory, and in considering the implications for our own art and writing practices.

Golda is concerned with the enmeshed affective, sensory and emotional encounters of migrant bodies in cycles of cross-cultural arrival, departure and home-coming (or re-emplacement). Making use of the notion of emplacement, the sensuous reaction of people to place,<sup>11</sup> Golda seeks to evoke and explore, through installation, the emotional territory opened up for her by the experience of moving between Poland and Australia as child and adult. She draws upon the specific folklore, domestic rituals and shamanistic practices performed by the women of her birth region, Zalipie village in Powisle Dabrowskie province, Poland, which depict intertwined physical and spiritual worlds, while performing acts of devotion, protection, healing, cleansing and renewal. In thinking about the intersensorial unfolding (sometimes mingling, sometimes clash) of sensations encountered, Golda describes her arrangements of objects, images and sensory stimuli (including ephemeral floral artworks, painted wall rugs, *pajaki* and *swiaty* hanging sculptures, personal altars and toy foxes) as constructing a performative space that seeks to 'stabilise the irreconcilable' through 'the recovery and salvaging of historical, collective, personal and sensory experiences and memory' and which, at the same time, acts as a 'resistance to local structures of feeling'.<sup>12</sup>

This is as much about a temporal relation with the present and future, as it is about an evocation of the past. As Thrift observes:

*it is often thought that affect is solely concerned with projections of the past. But, there is every reason to assume that affect is as concerned with projection or thrownness into the future, as a means of initiating action, as the power of intuition, [...] as a hunger for the future (as found in, for example, daydreams), as a set of fantasies (for example, as in romantic love [...]), and as a general sense of physical motility.<sup>13</sup>*

For Thrift, affect is communicative; a kind of interactional intelligence that acts as a way of 'initiating action, a reading of the sense of aliveness of the situation, and an intercorporeal transfer of that expectancy'.<sup>14</sup> My own interest is in the ways in which affect is instrumental; systematically fashioned and called upon in the urban landscape to do 'work' ranging from facilitating the orderly movement of pedestrian bodies in a shopping mall or the leisured, highway motorist; the production and consumption of cosmopolitanism and city vibrancy in the global economic competition between places; the cultivation of choice-politics or aspirational lifestyles; and the expression of everyday sociality and fantasy. In 2008, for example, the purchase of a can of house paint promises a *True Blue* encounter between *Jimmy Dean* and *Maxwell Smart*; crossing paths with *Funk* and *Freedom*, *Bring it On* or *Wot Eva*. In this affectual landscape, the manufacturer declares, 'unusual darker colours find themselves adjacent to moody accents in a pallet notable for its seemingly opposing threads of nostalgia, breathing space and vivaciousness'.<sup>15</sup> The business of forecasting annual colour trends provides a prosaic example that nevertheless lays down the potential for 'all manner of new emotional histories and geographies'.<sup>16</sup> The simple paint chart, however, can also be used to highlight Tolia-Kelly's concern that studies of affect be cognisant of universal and ethnocentric tendencies and the illusion of 'choice for all'. Tolia-Kelly argues instead for projects that are historicist, sensitive to difference and to power geometries – to the idea that the affective capacities of bodies are signified unequally within social spaces, and that the registers of affect and emotion are multiple rather than singular.<sup>17</sup>

These considerations are present too in everyday encounters with urban public spaces, with outdoor digital screens, with newspapers, television and cinema; all littered with faces, bodies, movement and emotion, and with traces of all manner of traditions of depiction and historical affective practices. The ubiquitous screen has become a powerful means of conveying and engaging affect. As followers of Asian action cinema or Japanese anime, however, how do Agnieszka Golda and I insert ourselves into complex (specific, historical) economies of affect to experience ironic pleasure, cosmopolitan fandom, anticipation, desire, transformation? With regard to the practices of contemporary installation art, the problematisation of studies of affect raises questions for us both as artists concerning the relations between bodies (our own and others), things

and spaces. In exploring the fluid boundaries between the representation or signification of affect (the depiction of tears or a domestic altar, for example), its display or performance (a person cries, a Polish woman expresses devotion), and its evocation (in which the body of an art viewer is moved to tears, to another place), how do we leave open possibilities for the 'something new' to emerge that Hawkins describes, and the something that escapes?

*This brings me back to the sense of Spill as confession, which is in part about reconciling an interior, personal experience with an exterior, collective one; a personal and community absolution, bringing experience (and affect) into the realm of the shared and agreed upon... The context of confession then is a useful one for thinking about what might be called 'scale' in relation to affect: the relationship between personal, embodied experience and broader social, political understandings or productions of affect.<sup>18</sup>*

*Spill* is the working surface of a nascent research project between two artists and a host of texts; a fragmentary stage or laboratory of conversation and interaction that has evolved over the last six months through the studio and over the internet, and now ventures into the space of the gallery.

- 1 R Fazakerley & A Golda, 2007, *Spill*, URL: spill-exhibition.blogspot.com.
- 2 Affect can be understood, for example, as a set of embodied practices that produce visible conduct (the expression of emotion); a manifestation of underlying drives; or a 'deep-seated physiological change written involuntarily on the face'. N Thrift, 2004, 'Intensities of feeling: towards a spatial politics of affect', *Geografiska Annaler* 86 B (1):57-78, p 64.
- 3 Recent research on consumer experience, for example, emphasizes the importance of embodiment, and the role that 'feelings' play in consumer decision making. See: B Joseph Pine & J H Gilmore, 1998, 'Welcome to the experience economy', *Harvard Business Review*, Jul-Aug 1998, pp 97-105; A Joy & J F Sherry, 2003, 'Speaking of art as embodied imagination: a multisensory approach to understanding aesthetic experience', *Journal of Consumer Research* 30:259-282.
- 4 See, for example, Crary's study of 'attention' as a specifically modern problem in the nineteenth century arising from new, subjective conceptions of vision and concerned with questions of whether attention was the conscious act of will of an autonomous, free subject; a biological function of instinct and unconscious drives; or a characteristic that could be produced and managed in an attentive individual 'through the knowledge and control of external procedures of stimulation'. In tandem with projects to know the particular bodies required of industrial labour, Crary suggests that institutional power increasingly required that perception function in such a way as to ensure a subject was productive, manageable, socially integrated and adaptive. Knowledge about (normative) attention offered a non-coercive means by which the individual observer could 'make perception its own', and at the same time become 'open to control and annexation by external agencies'. J Crary, 2000, *Suspensions of Perception: attention, spectacle and modern culture*, MIT Press, pp 4-5, 25.
- 5 Thrift notes that the design of urban spaces is increasingly, routinely concerned with invoking affective responses according to practical and theoretical knowledges derived from and coded by a host of sources: 'Though affective response can clearly never be guaranteed, the fact is that it is no longer a random process either. It is a form of landscape engineering that is gradually pulling itself into existence, producing new forms of power as it goes'. N Thrift, 2004, p 68. (John Urry, for example, describes the tourist gaze that has turned urban and natural environments into 'landscapes', making the subjective appreciation of a particular genre of visual representation an integral part of outdoor experience. J Urry, 2002, *The Tourist Gaze*, Sage, London.)
- 6 B Massumi, 2002, *Parables for the Virtual: movement, affect, sensation*, Duke UP, Durham NC, p 1.
- 7 B Massumi, 2002, p 35.
- 8 G Hawkins, 2002, 'Documentary affect: filming rubbish', *Australian Humanities Review* 27, URL: www.lib.latrobe.edu.au/AHR/archive/Issue-September-2002/hawkins.html.
- 9 B Massumi, 2002, p 27.
- 10 D P Tolia-Kelly, 2006, 'Affect – an ethnocentric encounter? Exploring the "universalist" imperative of emotional/affectual geographies', *Area* 38(2):213-217, p 213. See for example: K Anderson K, & S J Smith, 2001, 'Emotional geographies', *Trans. Institute of British Geographers* 26(1):7-10; J Davidson & C Milligan, 2004, 'Embodying emotion sensing space: introducing emotional geographies', *Social & Cultural Geography* 5(4):523-532; D McKay, 2005, 'Migration and the sensuous geographies of re-emplacement in the Philippines', *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 26(1-2):75-91; N Thrift, 2004.
- 11 See: D McKay, 2005; D Howes, 2006, 'Scent, sound and synesthesia: intersensoriality and material culture theory'; in C Tilley, et al (eds), *Handbook of Material Culture*, Sage, London, pp 161-172.
- 12 A Golda, 2007, personal communication.
- 13 N Thrift, 2005, 'But malice aforethought: cities and the natural history of hatred', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 30 (2):133-150, p 139.
- 14 N Thrift, 2005, p 139.
- 15 Resene Paints, 2007, 'Paint colour cues for 2008', URL: www.resene.com.au/comn/whtsnew2008\_paint\_colours.htm.
- 16 N Thrift, 2004, p 58.
- 17 D P Tolia-Kelly, 2006, 'Affect – an ethnocentric encounter?'; See also D P Tolia-Kelly, 2006, 'Fear in Paradise: the affective registers of the English Lake district re-visited', *IGU conference*, 3rd July 2006, QUT, Brisbane.
- 18 R Fazakerley & A Golda, 2007, *Spill*, URL: spill-exhibition.blogspot.com.





# Liquid Emotion & Transcultural Art

Divya Tolia-Kelly

In this essay I would like to reflect on the conceptual notion of 'liquidity' both as an imaginative metaphor and its relationship with the practice of painting emotional relationships with national landscapes. The concept of 'liquidity' for this project is essential to engender approaches to art that engage with fluidity in relation to landscape, emotion and art. In my own research, the site of the Lake District is a site where 'nation', 'Englishness' and national *sensibility* are consolidated. These modes of thinking rely on the medium of liquidity; the site of mere, lake and waterway operate as catalysts for the transposing of grand narrations of country and citizenship in ways that are differently resonant at other material sites of heritage. The environmental textures of this site have garnered the emotional responses of William Wordsworth and others, which in combination, constitute a national sensibility set in a Romantic era, wherein a particular notion of 'whose landscape' and 'which citizens' are part of *Englishness*. Re-thinking 'what difference liquidity makes' is critical to this essay. 'Liquidity' as a landscape concept, as a medium for art praxis and emotion in art in particular, becomes a space of solidification of ideas of a mobile, *transcultural*, and non-occidental approach to art and landscape, including the visual representation of the cultures of national identity. I argue that it is precisely because of the transgressive nature and possibilities enabled with a notion of 'liquidity' that we can consider transcultural art that includes communities usually occluded or 'othered' in art appreciation and praxis. Using examples from my own research and modern art from the Republic of Congo, I show how a transcultural approach disturbs notions of fixity in terms of their cultural value being located within the frame of ethnocentricism often iterated in geography, philosophy and European art history. Here, the landscape itself is shown to be in motion, liquid, along with the populations that traverse it and their sensory engagements with it. Nature and Culture are thus dynamic and in constant flux and not reflected in the singular discourses of 'national cultures' of landscape and citizenry.

## *Liquid Modernity and Emotional Politics*

In social theorist Zygmunt Bauman's<sup>1</sup> terms 'modernity' has now become liquid; instead of the sureties of old social structures (such as governance, economy and nations), society is liquid. Mobility, political activity, economies and ecological thinking are fluid, expansive and international in nature. If the role of art is to provoke, record and reflect, then *liquidity* conceptually captures the cultural mode of modernity and can materially engage with the liquidity of our emotional sensibilities and being. However, contrary to *liquid modernity*, the politics of nation states are still often located in understandings of *nation* being rooted in soil, blood and genealogies of 'rightful, moral citizens' based on linearity. For post-colonial nations such as Britain and Australia, stasis in national culture is a mythology; both nations have transcultural populations based on genetic mixing, yet both retain notions of a moral 'national citizen'<sup>2</sup> that can be described as being in denial of a transcultural citizenry.

In this essay I consider the value of recording emotional citizenry with landscape and ecologies from a transcultural perspective, promoting the medium of painting as primary transcultural art praxis. I argue that, as a means of thinking *transculturally*, the practice of using the medium of painting makes it possible to record emotional relationships with ecologies, land, time and history that reflect plural citizenries. In my own research, *Nurturing Ecologies*, the medium of paint is one that can incorporate the conceptualisation of emotion and 'modernity' as liquid in a transcultural nation that is Britain. Britain comprises landscape cultures evolved through Imperial networks of exchange of peoples, natures and cultures over centuries. The Lake District itself is evidence of these exchanges as it houses non-native species, place-names and peoples, which contribute to the aesthetic of English landscape that is recognisable as English. Historically, emotion becomes the sensory relationship with land and territory that consolidates relationships with ecological, geological and time structures; history and heritage are reflections of what is emotionally valued in nation. Securing a landscape art that reflects emotional connections with nation and liquid citizenry as it is lived now is what is needed in consolidating a truly modern art that reflects national citizenry from the perspective of those not included in formal accounts of Englishness.

In my own research, and in thinking about national, especially in these times of 'terror' and 'fear', post 9/11, emotion is critical in the geopolitical landscape. Emotions are manipulated in neo-Imperialist campaigns against 'terror' and for 'fear' as a vehicle for nationalisms and fundamentalisms on all political sides. The emotional economy is the driving force behind new legislation, the international denudation of human rights, and the drive to support military action in the Middle East and within homeland security. As geographer, Nigel Thrift<sup>3</sup> has argued, emotions are built into our everyday experiences in our landscapes of living; affective drivers of capital are evident in advertising campaigns, political lobbying and our day to day encounters with architecture, infrastructure and leisure. Emotion is a culpable factor in our decisions towards engagements with political action, negligence or quiet submission from material politics. What neo-conservative politicians have grasped is that emotion is material and has tangible consequences. This mode of articulation is made relevant in the cultural spaces of the public sphere; modern propaganda, news items, political rhetoric and popular discourse are embedded with visual images that invoke fear, terror, hate and love. Visual cultural representations hence are embedded in the political sphere and are strategic vehicles for geopolitical gestures in contemporary society. To advance a *politics of happiness* (in Sarah Ahmed's<sup>4</sup> terms) that incorporates a national culture which is inclusive, requires us to look to the vehicles of cultural narration that delimit the possibilities of a *multi-cultural* happiness in a transcultural global world.

### *Transcultural Art Praxis*

Visual cultures' own relationship with emotion is a pertinent place from which to consider political notions of *political citizenship* and in particular the notion of *transcultural* identities. I use the term *transcultural* here as a means to consider 'art', 'emotion' and 'identity' within an intellectual frame that incorporates notions of 'cultures of mobility', and 'national cultures' that are formed through international exchange of values, cultures and natures. This formulation represents an antithesis to the ethnocentrism retained within the academy and a 'universalism' reflected in general philosophical thought.<sup>5</sup> My focus here is to posit a framework of thinking which promotes and values a praxis and appreciation of art which is transcultural. This practice would be one which embraces emotion, identity and liquidity in relations with political citizenry. 'Liquidity' in relations with landscape, emotion, and the medium of art praxis are considered here, combined, and not collapsed into one another, to exemplify the possibilities of transcultural art which can make tangible transcultural emotional relationships with ecology, citizenship and landscape. This is not a claim that there are no universal emotions at all.<sup>6</sup> Simply, in the philosopher Lorraine Code's<sup>7</sup> terms, an approach that encompasses 'ecological thinking' in respect of our ethical and social approaches to the 'other'. She argues that we need to be responsible in developing our theories of knowledge that are 'organic' rather than ethnocentric, and hold to responsible epistemologies. My argument here is that in the case of research on art and emotion we need to be open to the relationship between culture, emotion and art, and thus use responsible taxonomies of art, culture and emotions themselves. This means that when we look onto 'African' art and 'European' art that we should be able to hold the same gaze, and engage with the structures of art of the 'other' without an inherited ethnocentric lens. This is where the concept of 'liquidity' is helpful – liquidity in our approach to philosophies of art, culture and epistemology extends the parameters of classification, but retains an imperative to explore and think transculturally and emotionally.

### *Challenging Hegelian taxonomies in art*

A transcultural art practice is of critical political significance, given the history of art history. In Hegelian accounts<sup>8</sup> on art, aesthetics, for him means 'more precisely, the science of sensation, of feeling'. This is a reflection of the fact that, in much of art history, emotion and art are sometimes collapsed within the artist's medium of choice, or the definition of art is reduced to whether or not it makes you 'feel'. I am not here going to journey through the meaning and nature of art. I am arguing that art, emotion and the politics of 'what is it to be human' and 'what kind of human are we' are intertwined. However, in earlier writings, the definition of human that is not artful has also been cast as an antithesis to a European model.

*... the Idea as reality, shaped in accordance with the Concept of the Idea, is the Ideal... In this regard it may be remarked in advance, what can only be proved later, namely that the defectiveness of a work of art is not always to be regarded as due, as may be supposed, to the artist's lack of skill; on the contrary, defectiveness of form results from defectiveness of content. So, for example, the Chinese, Indians, and Egyptians, in their artistic shapes, images of gods, and idols, never get beyond a formless*

*or a bad and untrue definitiveness of form. They could not master true beauty because their mythological ideas, the content and thought of their works of art, were still indeterminate, or determined badly, and so did not consist of content which is absolute in itself. Works of art are all the more excellent in expressing true beauty, the deeper is the inner truth of their content and thought.*<sup>9</sup>

In this vein, we need to incorporate transcultural vocabularies, grammars and ways of seeing, being and becoming in the contemporary landscape. This would enable a set of taxonomies that were transcultural, and 'ecological' in nature, which acknowledged the situation from which culture has evolved. It is also important to see 'culture' as being about humans and their relationship with place, in a dynamic model. Cultures are mobile and are influenced by networks of values and experiences. Englishness and English sensibility are not evolved in isolation, in situ, through a set of folk that reside as 'folk'. One example of how we can engage with liquidity and mobility of culture and landscape is through thinking art as emotion in place. This is not a two-dimensional notion of a concept of people in landscape that lead to a tangible form on canvas, but a conceptualisation of 'liquidity' of landscape, emotions and cultures of folk being in-process. The first step towards this is to consider an artist who is celebrated by the art establishment as making art that is about emotion in place and time.

### *Howard Hodgkin: making emotion liquid*

The painter Howard Hodgkin is regarded as one of the most important artists working in Britain today. Hodgkin is important both technically and conceptually. Each of his canvases represents emotional experiences, memorialised on the painting plane. Emotion is made liquid and then re-evoked through Hodgkin's particular visual vocabularies and grammars. Visually the images at first seem naive, but Hodgkin attempts to attain a depth of emotion, constructed through sweeps of colour and a layering process which is haunting, enlivening and moving. The liquidity of the paint and emotion are synthesised sometimes on wood, sometimes canvas, evoking a grand scale and a melancholy mood. My interest here is the notion of translating the ephemeral, intangible, fluidity of emotional experience on to a tangible painting plane of a canvas. The medium of liquidity is I think helpful in this process of transposition and translation. The concept of 'liquidity' is valuable philosophically, aesthetically, materially and politically. Here, the medium of liquidity is 'open' to scale, form and cultural values, the liquidity of paint allows for a transcultural interpretation and representations – not limited by palate or form.

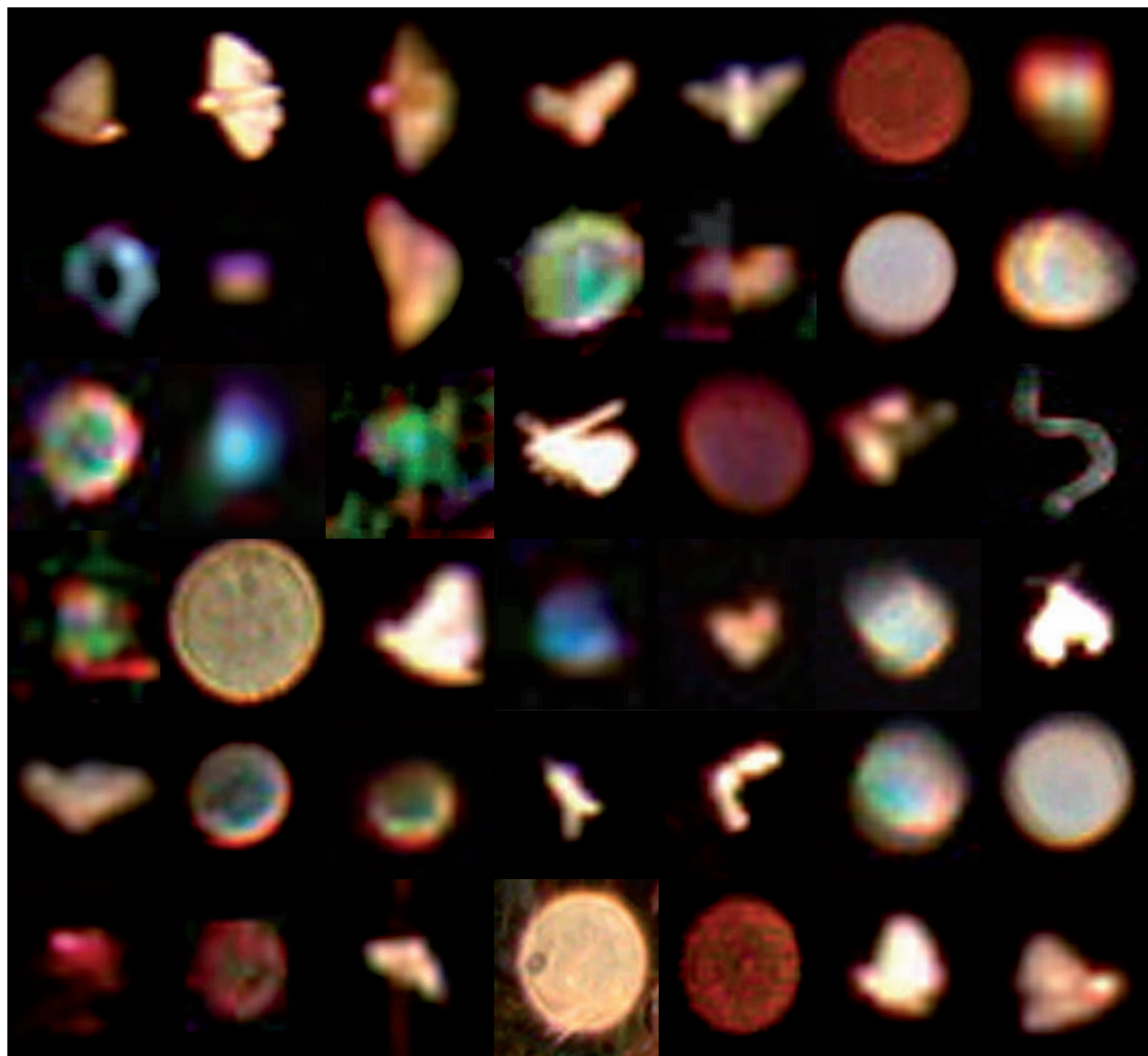
### *Painting the Transcultural English Landscape*

The artist Graham Lowe and I had a mutual interest in heritage, landscape and everyday values of the material English landscape. We also believed that there was a need to investigate other 'visions' and examine an alternative perspective to those found commonly in the UK. We aimed to record landscape experiences not normally visualised on canvas. This is beyond a notion of the sovereign negotiator of landscape in a 'performative milieu'<sup>10</sup>, experiencing landscape as *phenomenon*; and instead of landscape images reflecting the usual figure of a *universalised* body of a citizen free of fear of racial and/or sexual attack, fear of the



True Blue

Prawdziwy Błękit



lack of 'rightful encounter' with a landscape, free of the constraints of childcare, and economic constraints to roam. We engaged with migrant communities, the poorer and elderly of Cumbria and Lancashire. In our research project *Nurturing Ecologies*<sup>11</sup> there was a political intention to record multiple cultures of engagement of individuals and groups who are fearful, frail and feel endangered by the concept of even just walking the lakeside pathways of Windermere. Revisiting the sensory values embedded in the landscape incorporated a desire to record emotional, multisensory values beyond written text – and to engage with those not necessarily accessing this landscape through a visual or literary tradition of English Romanticism with complete sovereignty. The design aimed to enable a creative process, empowering those who didn't write; a re-visioning of the emotional values of the Lakes and a re-imaging of this landscape's sensory registers, firstly through the representational art of participants in the form of their drawings and collages. These represent sensory values, materially encountered, as they evoke memories of biographical landscapes not normally seen. In essence, the paintings produced by the artist have captured an alternative emotional citizenry to those sensory registers canonised within this cultural landscape. For me this site is one which exemplifies the 'liquidity' of Englishness itself. It has evoked emotions in its historic canonisation from Blake, to Constable, Turner and Wordsworth. There is something about the nature of the lakes and the scale of water and rock juxtaposed which forces encounters with emotional narratives. The mobility, and transcultural nature of the lakes is intrinsic to its form. In Doreen Massey's terms a reorientation is needed in our vision of this site, as one that:

*stimulated by the conceptualization of the rocks as on the move leads even more clearly to an understanding of both place and landscape as events, as happenings, as moments that will be again dispersed... Rather, and once again bearing in mind the movement of the rocks, both space and landscape could be imagined as provisionally intertwined simultaneities of ongoing, unfinished, stories... Indeed, maybe the very notion of 'landscape' has ... evoked a surface which renders that intertwining – knowable and fully representable. Rather it is that a landscape, these hills, are the (temporary) product of a meeting up of trajectories out of which mobile uncertainty a future is – has to be – negotiated.*<sup>12</sup>

Graham Lowe's paintings attempt to record a contemporary *Englishness* that engages with migrant communities living in the vicinity of the Lake District landscape. The aim was to record a *transcultural* lens which includes all forms of emotional attachments to this iconic landscape. This is a way of thinking which incorporates the possibilities for new visual grammar, vocabularies and emotional landscapes for our contemporary notions of 'home', belonging, being, habitus, modernity, and mobile cosmopolitan, liquid citizenry. In one image, Lowe attempts to incorporate the group's notion of landscape being formed over centuries, in geological time, where migrants from Africa, Rome, China, Europe and America have traversed this landscape and left their marks on it.<sup>13</sup> The English Lakes have formed through an environmental history that involves the imperial gateways to 'other' peoples and their natures. This landscape is 'in process', and made up of a palette of international cultures.

In another image, Graham Lowe reflects upon the Lakes as being one that inspires 'play' and 'joy' for all who visit, rather than the 'fear' and 'awe' that reverberates in accounts from British migrant communities.<sup>14</sup> William Wordsworth himself in his *Guide to the Lakes* states that he has not just written the guide for 'the inhabitants of the district *merely*, but, as hath been intimated, for the sake of everyone, however humble his condition, who coming hither shall bring with him an eye to perceive, and a heart to feel and worthily enjoy'. Wordsworth welcomes the world to his Lakes, and wishes all to keep in their regard 'the good or happiness of others'. Embodied, affective experience and cultural enfranchisement to the Lake District landscape, is a right that continues to be struggled over,<sup>15</sup> not simply in terms of access, but in terms of which cultures 'of being' are allowed to formulate our cultures of national landscape sensibility. Graham Lowe's paintings re-figure the landscape as being a place to play for all, without the constraints of a narrow *Englishness* which operates counter to an England that is modern and *liquid*.

#### *Conclusion – Liquid Modernity; post-colonial, transcultural modern landscapes of emotion*

I want to end with a final example of an alternative way of thinking modernity through a concept of liquidity, where painting praxis challenges irresponsible taxonomies still prevalent in the art academy. I recently went to *Tate Modern* to see a display of paintings by a group of internationally recognised, contemporary artists living and working in Kinshasa, Democratic Republic of Congo, known as the 'School of Popular Painting'.<sup>16</sup> These artists focus on their experience of everyday life and culture, resulting in a political satire about the geopolitical scene in the territory of Kinshasa.

*Largely self-taught, the artists developed their distinctive style by painting signs and billboards, an influence reflected in the vibrant colours of their mural-sized canvases.*<sup>17</sup>

All the Kinshasa artists regard painting as a political medium enabling change. Some works portray political or social conflicts, others use satire and humour. Emotion and art come together as a post-colonial critique of neo-liberal economics and 'democracy' in Congo, to the assertion of consumer economies that negate human needs in cities such as Kinshasa. In Graham Lowe's account, the Lake District became a space for all. In this final example the argument made is that art should become a transnational discipline; there is a lack of 'liquidity' in conceptualizing art negating the true nature of modernity as being truly liquid, transcultural and emotive. This is an image by Cheik Ledy.<sup>18</sup> Here, he depicts himself in a moment of confusion within a modern art gallery, failing to understand abstract paintings rendered in styles resembling the works of famous European artists, such as Picasso. The irony reverberates. For many African artists the roots of Picasso's modernity are in the 'primitive' textures and aesthetics of African art. The lack of 'relevance', cognition, empathy or a sense of dialogue, locks artists into different worlds. The nature of their own painting is displayed in the Tate as naive, unscholarly, yet valuable; different to the reception of Picasso's grammar. Picasso's conveying a sense of false naivety is considered as intellectual, while Cheik Ledy's is

considered vernacular, and almost un-intellectual: the Tate claims that 'the artist chooses instead to ground his practice in more legible imagery and straightforward cultural politics'. The stance of Cheik Ledy as an artist is represented as looking onto modernity, not part of it. His embodied cultural capital is designated as outside modern art, yet he embodies the nature of modernity – transcultural, mobile and at the heart of 'fear', 'terror' and wars over resources.

In Massey's terms, landscape is in motion, in a geological time frame. However, landscape is dynamically shaping present cultures of citizenship and national identity. We must remember that stasis in (art) culture, landscape or nature itself is a mythology. These are liquid, modern times, always mobile, always transcultural, and cosmopolitan. Plurality is woven through the painted images discussed here. A need to embrace liquidity in art theory, praxis, landscape, culture and emotion can stand as a testament for future cultural worlds. A transcultural approach to art and landscape can reflect responsible taxonomies of art and citizenship which are truly ecological.

- 1 Zygmunt Bauman, 2007, *Liquid Times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty*, Polity Press, Cambridge.
- 2 David Matless, 1998, *Landscape and Englishness*, Reaktion Press, London.
- 3 Nigel Thrift, 2004, 'Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect', *Geografiska Annaler, Series B: Human Geography* 86 (1):57-78; Thrift, 2005, 'But malice aforethought: cities and the natural history of hatred', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* NS30:133-150.
- 4 Sarah Ahmed, 2007 (forthcoming), 'Multiculturalism and the Promise of Happiness', *New Formations*.
- 5 D. P. Tolia-Kelly, 2006, 'Affect - an ethnocentric encounter?: exploring the "universalist" imperative of emotional/ affectual geographies', *Commentary, Area* 38(2):213-7.
- 6 See Mette Hjort and Sue Laver, 1997, *Emotion and the Arts*, Oxford University Press, pp 3-34.
- 7 See Lorraine Code, 2006, *Ecological Thinking*, Oxford University Press.
- 8 See G.W. F. Hegel, 1975, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*, (translation by T.M. Knox), Oxford University Press Oxford, 1-3; 2-25; 69-90.
- 9 G.W. F. Hegel, 1975, *Aesthetics: Lectures on Fine Art*.
- 10 See John Wylie, 2005, 'A single day's walking: narrating self and landscape on the South West Coast Path', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 30:234-247.
- 11 Lancastrian artist Graham Lowe produced a set of 40 images in summer 2004, from a joint research project with Dr. Tolia-Kelly entitled *Nurturing Ecologies*, designed to investigate the multicultural values of the English Lake District to residents of Lancashire. The exhibition *Nurturing Ecologies/ Maps of the Known World* has been held: December 2007 (forthcoming), Durham Light Infantry Museum and Gallery; March 2006, Theatre by the Lake, Keswick; June 2005, Towneley Hall Gallery, Burnley; January 2005, Duke's Theatre Gallery, Lancaster.
- 12 Doreen Massey, 2006, 'Landscape as a Provocation: Reflections on Moving Mountains', *Journal of Material Culture* 11: 33-48.
- 13 G Lowe, 2004, *Changing Landscape*, acrylic on canvas.
- 14 G Lowe, 2004, *A Place to Play*, acrylic on canvas.
- 15 Wendy Joy Darby, 2000, *Landscape and Identity: Geographies of Nation and Class in England*, Berg, Oxford.
- 16 Chéri Samba is recognised as the instigator of the 'School of Popular Painting' in Kinshasa.
- 17 Tate promotional literature, 2006.
- 18 Cheik Ledy, 1995, *I do not understand*, acrylic on canvas, Collection of the Tate Gallery.

# Acknowledgements

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